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SUBJECT: IDENT REVIEW RAISES CONCERNS ABOUT SENEGALESE PASSPORT
APPLICATION SECURITY

SUMMARY

¶1. (U) Embassy Dakar recently reviewed the cases of refused Non-Immigrant Visa (NIV) applicants whose IDENT hits revealed mala fide identity changes. This review identified several instances when legitimate Senegalese documents were obtained using fraudulent information. Two patterns of identity change are especially apparent: refused applicants from Banjul have changed their identity and reapplied - without luck - in Dakar as Senegalese applicants, and a number of Senegalese applied for asylum or to adjust status in the U.S. using a different identity than in their visa applications. This cable aims to share our findings and these trends.

THE SENEGAMBIANS

¶2. (SBU) A review of IDENT and Facial Recognition (FR) "hits" from the last two years shows at least seven applicants with Senegalese passports who were previously refused under Gambian identities. Of these, five of the applicants were women, and the alleged age of all seven applicants ranges from 25 to 38 years. In Dakar the applicants spoke either Wolof - a local language common to both countries - or insisted on interviewing in English. (Few Senegalese, even students with good English, request to interview in English.) Interestingly, most of the applicants changed their names only slightly, from the Gambian English to the Senegalese French spelling of the same family name. For instance, Gambian "Rohey Gibba" became Senegalese "Rokhayatou Djiba," and "Alassan Demba Joll Ceesay" (DPOB: 15-Aug-1970, Banjul) became Alassane Demba Diol (DOB: 10-Aug-1970, Pikine, Senegal).

¶3. (SBU) In the latter case, the applicant went to creative - if futile - lengths to explain the fingerprint match, returning to the consulate with a man he claimed was his fraternal twin. They insisted that their mother had given birth to Mr. Diol in Pikine, a Dakar suburb, making him a Senegalese citizen, before she traveled many hours overland to The Gambia to give birth to his twin brother, Alassan Ceesay, in Banjul five days later.

THE SENEGALESE IDENTITY CHANGERS

¶4. (SBU) While at least seven applicants changed from Gambian to Senegalese, there are only four NIV applicants we know of with Senegalese passports under two different identities. None of these applicants applied with compelling stories under either identity, and the officers refused the applicants under section 214(b) before receiving the IDENT results. Only one applicant retained a similar name, but changed his date of birth by ten years. Others changed their biographical information dramatically. For example, Fatou

Diouf (DOB: 20-Jan-1982) became Diariatou Sakho (DOB: 19-Sep-1984). Three of the four applicants actually changed their date of birth to make them as much as ten years younger in their second application - something which may reveal misguided "wisdom on the street" of how to improve one's chances on the visa line.

THE ASYLUM SEEKERS AND STATUS CHANGERS

15. (SBU) IDENT also exposed at least eight Senegalese (all men) who applied for asylum or to change status in the United States using one name and/or date of birth while consistently using a different identity in all other visa applications. In these cases, no CCD record exists for the names and dates of birth provided to the Citizenship and Immigration Services officer. In their post-asylum claim NIV interviews, Consular Officers' notes indicate some of these applicants also insisted on interviews in English, and none of them admitted to prolonged stays in their NIV interviews. The timing of the IDENT hits indicates that these individuals filed new visa applications almost as soon as they returned to Senegal. The fastest re-application we know of is Ibrahima Taha (DOB: 03-Jan-1978) who told us on June 26, 2006 that he was going to buy goods in the U.S. and had only been there once, in 2001. In this and a later interview in 2007, the officers noted that he did not appear to be a legitimate trader and appeared evasive. After the interview, IDENT revealed that he had applied for CIS services just six weeks earlier on May 7, 2006 as Ousmane Sangare (DOB: 23-Dec-1965).

THE OTHERS

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16. (U) IDENT shows other individuals with Senegalese passports who were previously refused as Guinean, Mauritanian, or Tunisian NIV applicants. We also found two cases of recent Visa 92 (asylee follow-to-join) applicants (one applying as a Gambian and one as a Senegalese) in their early thirties who changed their identities after being refused a diversity visa and an NIV, respectively. (Before 2007, Visa 92 applicants were not fingerprinted or run through FR. Now that they are processed in the NIV software, we anticipate finding further FR or IDENT matches and identity changes.)

Comment

17. (SBU) Despite the efforts these applicants made to change their identity, they did not, apparently, invest the same time and effort in polishing their stories - all but one were refused 214(b) upon the initial interview, and in several cases the interviewing officer noted fundamental inconsistencies in the applicant's story or excessively nervous behavior on the applicant's part. Nor did they attempt to dramatically change the "qualifications" -- i.e., economic and social profiles - which had earned them a refusal in their original identity. This unpolished approach to fraud leads us to believe that these cases do not represent the efforts of organized or sophisticated groups.

18. (SBU) We are surprised at the high incidence of Gambians perpetrating identity fraud here - 10 of our 18 IDENT cases involved an applicant holding at least one Gambian passport, despite the fact that Gambians account for less than one percent of our NIV applicants. As the processing post for Gambian immigrant visa applicants, we have long known that Gambian civil documents are easily faked or fraudulently obtained. The IDENT results reviewed here have heightened our awareness that Senegal, as well, has exploitable weaknesses in the production of its passports or "founding" identity documents. Post raised the issue of vulnerabilities in the Senegalese passport application process with Ministry of Interior officials in the summer of 2006, when the first of these cases came to our attention. We will seek future

opportunities to reiterate the message.

PIAZZA